

Washington, DC – To effectively address the growing number of unsafe children’s products that make it on the market, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) voted in favor of, and the House passed by a 424-1 margin, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (HR 4040). Today’s vote was on the final agreement of the bill’s conference report. This legislation takes unprecedented steps to prevent items with lead from being sold, strengthen the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and increase oversight to ensure that CPSC does its job. — “It is unacceptable that 45 million toys and children’s products needed to be recalled in 2007, with some containing nearly 200 times the legal amount of lead,” said Congressman Sestak. “This bill implements regulations that will allow us to significantly decrease the number of dangerous products that become available for purchase and, in the occasional occurrence when something unsafe is allowed into American homes, it will be much easier for families to find out if they own a product that needs to be recalled.”

Provisions designed to reduce injuries caused by merchandise include a prohibition of any lead beyond a minute amount in products designed for children under age 12, and a ban on more than a miniscule measurement of phthalates, a group of harmful chemicals sometimes added to plastics. In addition, the act mandates third-party, pre-market testing for compliance with safety standards, including lead regulations, by certified laboratories of children’s products.

One factor that has made the increasing number of toy recalls more troublesome is the lack of resources at CPSC. The agency lost 15 percent of its workforce between 2004 and 2007. An authorization of appropriations starting at \$118 million in 2010 and ending at \$136 million five years later will significantly impact the ability of CPSC to inspect products and operate recalls efficiently. The Commission will also receive assistance from manufacturers, who will be required to place distinguishing marks on products and packaging to aid in recalls. In addition, this bill requires CPSC, within two years, to provide consumers with a user-friendly, searchable database on deaths and serious injuries caused by consumer products, and to share information with State public health agencies in a way that will allow federal and state agencies to easily work together on this issue. Funds provided to CPSC include a specific travel allowance for the Commission’s commissioners and staff, who will be prohibited from using industry-sponsored travel.

Furthermore, this legislation includes measures to make certain that the above provisions are carried out correctly, authorizing injunctive enforcement of federal law by State Attorneys General and providing whistleblower protections for private sector employees who allege violations of any CPSC-enforced product safety requirements.

“Lawmakers at the local, state and federal levels need to make consumer safety a priority, and do all they can to ensure that people—especially children—remain protected from dangerous products,” said Congressman Sestak. “Every American deserves the peace of mind of knowing that when they purchase a product, their government has made every effort to make sure it is safe.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.

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